

FAQs – EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreements

- 1) **How much funding is available? How many grants will be awarded?** Up to approximately \$9.2 million in grant funding is expected to be available for 46 projects nationwide. See the updated Request for Applications amended on April 19, 2021 for details about the sources of funding and allowable activities. Cooperative agreements will be awarded in amounts of up to \$200,000 per award. Awards are for two years. Projects should plan a start date of October 1, 2021.
- 2) **Who is eligible to apply?** This solicitation is open to non-profit organizations (registered with the IRS or their State/territorial government), US Territories, Tribal governments (either Federally-recognized or State-recognized), Tribal organizations, and Freely Associated States (i.e. Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau).
- 3) **What types of projects may be funded under this announcement?** This announcement has 3 areas of emphasis with projects focusing on addressing the impacts of: 1) the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved communities, 2) Climate and Disaster Resiliency as well as Emergency Preparedness for underserved communities, and 3) projects proposed by new applicants and/or grantees to the EJCPS program.
- 4) **What are some types of allowable COVID-19 related projects?** Specifically, projects aimed at supporting public education, training, and emergency planning for communities impacted by COVID-19. Examples of projects include (but are not limited to): sharing information related to EPA-approved disinfectants to combat COVID-19; education activities related to COVID-19 vaccine information; addressing increased exposure of residents to in-home pollutants and healthy housing issues; training community health workers, and projects focusing on food insecurity issues exacerbated in communities heavily impacted by COVID-19 (leading to excessive vehicle miles traveled). **NOTE: While sharing information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine is allowable, EPA funds cannot be used to administer COVID-19 vaccines.**
- 5) **What are some allowable Climate/Disaster Resiliency projects?** Examples include (but are not limited to): Development of emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency action plans and programs for underserved communities and vulnerable populations to minimize the exposure to pollutants in the event of a natural disaster. Training on disaster response and/or for local community emergency responders. Disasters include but are not limited to hurricanes, tornadoes, coastal flooding, oil spills, wildfires, and earthquakes. Projects should address and/or prepare communities for the increases in pollution that can result from these and other disasters.
- 6) **Can applicants propose projects that are NOT related to the COVID-19 or Climate/Disaster Resiliency?** Yes. Projects addressing long-standing environmental injustices are also strongly encouraged. Types of general EJ projects include (but are not limited to):
 - a. Air Quality & Asthma

- b. Water Quality & Sampling
 - c. Food Access to reduce vehicle travel and fuel emissions
 - d. Stormwater & Green Infrastructure
 - e. Lead Contamination
 - f. Pesticides and other Toxic Substances
 - g. Healthy Homes
 - h. Illegal Dumping
 - i. Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Resiliency
 - j. Environmental Job Training
 - k. Youth Development through Environmental Education
- 7) **How is a cooperative agreement different than a grant?** The primary difference between a grant and a cooperative agreement is the level of U.S. government involvement in the project during the project's performance period. The SEJCA projects promote collaboration and partnerships between governments. Therefore, rather than just the awarding Agency, applicants should view EPA as a partner on the SEJCA projects (in addition to the THREE other partners applicants should include in their projects). EPA's substantial involvement may include: close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant; collaboration during the performance of the scope of work, review of proposed procurements; reviewing qualifications of key personnel; and/or review and comment on the content of printed or electronic publications prepared.
- 8) **Can EJPCS projects include extensive lead pipe replacement, demolition of buildings, or construction of needed infrastructure in underserved communities?** No, construction activities are not eligible under EJPCS. In general, construction is considered building of large structures. Removal of large amounts of dirt and extensive use of heavy machinery are signs that a project includes construction activities. While EJPCS funds cannot be used for construction, partners and/or funds from other resources can be used to cover the cost of necessary construction activities. As stated in the RFA, "All applications for EJPCS activities under this solicitation must relate to gathering or transferring information or advancing awareness." However, for projects focused on training personnel, some activities which may fall under the "construction" umbrella may be allowable if those activities are determined to be reasonable and necessary to execute an otherwise eligible project. In these cases, applicants are encouraged to contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII of the RFA for clarity on the potential eligibility/ineligibility of their project.
- 9) **Why are surveys ineligible activities for EJPCS even though surveys are listed as allowable in most of the qualified environmental statutes?** Because the EJPCS awards will be cooperative agreements where EPA will be substantially involved in the projects, EPA's restrictions under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 apply. EPA is restricted from collecting information of more than 10 people without receiving prior OMB approval. Therefore, EJPCS funds cannot be used to perform surveys (i.e. EJ funds

can't be used to collect the data). However, applicants can perform surveys themselves or use funds from other sources or partners to execute the survey. NOTE - Applicants **can** use EJ funds to analyze data derived from outside surveys and use that data throughout the rest of EJPCS project.

10) Do we need to provide documentation of our organization's nonprofit status?

YES. An eligible non-profit organization applicant must include verification of the organization's incorporation status. Attach your organization's certificate that shows that your organization is either:

- a. a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization as designated by the Internal Revenue Service; OR
- b. a non-profit organization recognized by the state, territory, commonwealth, or tribe in which it is located. Verification must be on official state government letterhead.

11) Does an organization have to be located in the same state, territory, or tribal area where the project will occur?

Yes, eligible entities must be located within the same state, territory, commonwealth, or tribal jurisdiction that the proposed project will be located. This means that an applicant's registered address of record (i.e. the address designated on their IRS or State-sanctioned documentation) must be in the same state, territory, commonwealth or tribe as the location of the proposed project. This requirement supports the EJPCS program goal for grantees having a direct connection with the target communities of EJ-funded projects.

12) Are Fiscal Agents/sponsors allowed?

Yes, fiscal agents and/or fiscal sponsors ARE eligible to apply to this opportunity as long as the fiscal agent or sponsor is a 501(c)3 or State-incorporated non-profit organization. However, the applying organization (the fiscal agent) needs to understand that (1) they will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria, including their programmatic capability, and (2) they will ultimately will be responsible for carrying out the project.

13) My organization is NOT an eligible organization under the EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving Program. Does this prohibit our organization from participating in this opportunity?

Organizations considered ineligible under EJPCS are encouraged to partner with an eligible organization. Partners can receive EJ funding through subawards and/or contracts. So, while your organization may not be eligible to apply, it's likely you can still receive a portion of the EJ funding through partnering. Please refer to the announcement for details in relation to applicant eligibility and partnership requirements.

14) My organization engages in lobbying federal/state/local governments. Does our lobbying activity make us ineligible under this announcement?

Organizations may not use Federal grant funds or cost-sharing funds to conduct lobbying activities of any kind. Please refer to Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. If a proposal is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of

the proposal will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the proposal, render the entire proposal ineligible for funding.

15) Are partnerships required?

Technically, no. However, there are a significant number of points allocated for partnerships in the evaluation criteria. So, while you may not be ineligible if you don't have partnerships, you most likely won't score as well on that criterion. **Therefore, partnerships are strongly encouraged.** Letters of Support or Commitment are also encouraged so EPA can verify the partnership.

16) How should I submit Letters of Commitment?

When submitting your application via grants.gov, you should: Consolidate all letters into one document Label this document "Partnership Letters" or "Letters of Commitment" and Submit the document using the "Other Attachments Form."

17) Can I partner with an organization located in a different state? YES, if the reasoning is thoroughly explained in your proposal. For example, if you partner with an organization located in a neighboring state, you should explain why that partnership is relevant to your project or important for achieving results for the target underserved communities and/or vulnerable populations in your location.

18) Will EPA consider multiple applications from a single organization for the 2021 EJ Small Grants or EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving announcements? No. Applicants should only submit one EJ grant application. Applicants can choose either the EJCS or EJCS announcement. Applicants cannot receive more than one EJ award between these two announcements. Therefore, it is important that applicants read the details of each announcement carefully to determine which opportunity they are better suited for.

19) What is the procedure for modification of an application? All applicants who wish to modify an application must resubmit a new application in accordance with all guidelines and application criteria as stated in the announcement. Applicants should include a cover memo acknowledging the revised submission and a request to disregard any previously submitted applications. All revised applications/submissions must be received by the published deadline.

20) My workplan exceeds the fourteen-page limit. Will this affect my eligibility to be considered for an award? The workplan should not exceed eleven (14), single-spaced, typewritten pages. Anything over fourteen (14) pages will not be read by the Review Panel. The pages of the workplan should be letter-size (8 1/2 X 11 inches) and the text should be single-spaced. It is recommended that applicants use a standard 12-point type with 1-inch margins.

21) What is the smallest font size I can use for the proposal? The minimum font size is 11 pt. The preference for font is Times New Roman.